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# REPORT OF THE COMMISSION ON ITS TWENTY-SIXTH SESSION

Draft report

Addendum

Rapporteur: J. A. MWANIKI (Kenya)

## Chapter ___. SPECIAL ISSUES

### Increasing user awareness of the value of statistical outputs and services

1. The Commission considered item 3 (a) of its agenda at its 436th and 437th meetings on 4 February 1991. It had before it the reports of the Secretary-General on increasing user awareness of the value of statistical outputs and services (E/CN.3/1991/3) and on updated information on the work of the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat (E/CN.3/1991/30, sect. 1).

2. The Commission welcomed the report of the Secretary-General on increasing user awareness of the value of statistical outputs and services (E/CN.3/1991/3) and expressed appreciation to the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat for its preparation and to the national statistical offices and international organizations that had completed the questionnaire used as a basis for the report. The Commission considered that the experiences described in the report would be of value to both national statistical offices and international organizations. However, the Commission stressed that national statistical offices and international organizations would need to diagnose their own situations and assess the appropriateness of the various approaches in the light of each country's specific problems, needs and overall circumstances.



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3. The discussion focused on ways to improve user awareness in statistical outputs. Several members noted that a first condition to promoting awareness was that the statistical outputs should be of adequate quality and meet user needs. The priorities frequently expressed by users include timeliness, quality, comparability, clarity of presentation and provision of analysis and interpretation. Some users also frequently wanted policy implications to be highlighted. In addition, data at the provincial or local authority level were needed by some users. Other methods of meeting user needs include the presentation of data in a regional context and the inclusion of international data in national publications. Also, the satisfaction of many user needs required the use of current technologies available to and preferred by users, including the provision of user-friendly software. In addition, in some cases, user needs were better met by providing aggregate series in standard outputs and leaving the more detailed data to be disseminated in other ways on request. It was also recognized that needs changed with changing economic, social and political situations, as described by several representatives, including representatives of countries in transition.

4. The Commission noted the action taken by national statistical offices and international organizations to promote awareness of their statistical outputs. Much of the action taken was similar in many of the countries. The need to use multiple channels was emphasized by many members and it was noted that different approaches were needed in relation to the different outputs of national statistical offices. The action taken fit broadly into four groups, as follows: use of the media, consultations with users, dialogue with providers of data and promotional activities.

5. Many participants described the use of the media for disseminating statistical data. This was done through press releases, press conferences, interviews between media representatives and senior staff of the national statistical office and generally maintaining an effective and open dialogue with the media. It was, in many developed and developing countries, a major means through which statistical information was communicated to many people and organizations. The use of local languages in the media particularly helped to increase awareness among the general population. However, in some situations the media may be less appropriate and other means of dissemination, such as user committees, workshops and seminars, could be considered better vehicles for the dissemination of statistics.

6. Many participants considered consultation with users to be a key factor. Several national statistical offices identified the various groups of users they served. Those offices formulated policies and programmes tailored for users, with the needs of the specific user group in mind. Some national statistical offices found that bilateral dialogues at senior levels were effective means to determine user needs and to promote existing statistical products. The establishment of various user-producer advisory committees or user panels for different statistics was also found to be an efficient way to determine priorities and seek advice and also to educate users on how best they can access, understand and use statistical information.

7. The value of maintaining a dialogue with the providers of statistical information was also stressed. Frequently, providers were also users. It was considered beneficial to explain to the providers the importance of statistical censuses and surveys as that fostered a positive attitude towards the studies and elicited improved responses. In general, it was considered that effort devoted to educating providers on the nature and use of statistics enhanced confidence levels and knowledge of statistics and generally promoted positive responses to statistical data collection. One member indicated that, in order to maintain good relations with specific suppliers of information, the national statistical office provided brief results of the previous survey each time new questionnaires were distributed.

8. Many members cited various channels through which they promoted their statistical outputs. These include general public relations activities, advertising, cross-advertising in publications, direct mailings to known users, personal letters, contact with the artist community, national competitions (mainly among schoolchildren), the establishment of a National Statistics Day at the national or regional level and the use of public displays of statistical information, using current technologies, including computer graphics, about attendance at major meetings, industry fairs and other events. Promotional activity was found to be most effective when it was targeted at specific user groups. Some national statistical offices also tried to promote the national statistical office as a vital institution on a continuous basis through a variety of approaches. Dissemination of data banks was found to be a useful way of increasing awareness of statistics availability in developing countries; but that aspect had not been widely developed in developing countries and technical co-operation was required, particularly in relation to the relevant technology.

9. The practice in relation to charging a fee for statistical outputs varied among national statistical offices. In general, the national statistical offices were seen as providing a public good and the products were aimed at facilitating government policy and monitoring and fostering community understanding of issues. This activity was usually funded centrally and the outputs were either provided free of charge or at nominal cost. In the process of completing these outputs, and in some cases as a result of special surveys and studies, the national statistical offices also had the ability to produce customized outputs and technologically advanced products, which were made available at a fee. The latter situation is a common practice in an increasing number of national statistical offices. The basis of charging varied, including full economic cost on a profit-making basis, dissemination costs only (printing and distribution) and on a cost-recovery basis for new outputs or special surveys. The point was made that charging for outputs was an effective means of clarifying the priority needs of users, and of encouraging statistical office staff to adopt an approach more oriented towards meeting user needs. Other practices involving financial support included having users, including some government departments, contribute to or cover in full the cost of special surveys. It was noted that in some countries, particularly developing countries, revenues went into general government revenue and were not available to the national statistical office. In addition, the obligation to provide copies of outputs on a complimentary basis strained resources.

10. It was generally agreed that the two objectives of providing a public good and special products to meet specific user needs should be harmonized. They could be pursued simultaneously and without conflict, although it was emphasized that caution should be exercised to avoid distorting programme priorities because of the availability of funds from specific interest groups for certain outputs.

11. Several national statistical offices had made special organizational arrangements to promote awareness among users, increase dissemination and better meet user needs. This sometimes included the creation of a special unit for dissemination, or marketing and market development. The point was made that in a situation of severe budget constraints a decentralized statistical system could be resource effective where the national statistical office might concentrate on general statistical needs, while the various sectoral ministries would be responsible for statistics in specific areas. The status of the national statistical organizations in the overall government framework could also affect funding. In some cases, the national statistical offices needed to promote awareness in all government circles of the contribution that statistics can make to policy formulation. In many cases, this could affect budget allocations even for routine statistical activities and needed government support to obtain resources from donors for specific areas of statistics. In this connection, the point was made that it was necessary in the developing countries to reconcile the interests of aid agencies and the data needed by countries for their own needs.

12. While recognizing that the report could be a good basis for sharing information and experiences among countries, several members requested that a more detailed report be prepared, including expansion of the survey to cover more countries. This could be done by sending the existing study to additional national statistical offices for their supplementary comments and experiences. The new report should be made available to all national statistical offices and international organizations.

13. It was also suggested that planning commissions and other major users could be surveyed for their needs and their views on statistical outputs. Finally, the point was made that international organizations could learn from the experiences of national statistical offices and that there was scope for greater collaboration between national statistical offices and international organizations on dissemination and ways in which statistical outputs could be made more responsive to user needs.

## Action taken by the Commission

14. The Commission:

(a) Welcomed the report and considered that it would be a helpful tool for national statistical offices and international organizations in deciding on action that might be effective, but stressed that the possible action needed to be assessed in the light of the specific problems, needs and circumstances of each national statistical office and international organization;

(b) Noted that national statistical offices had taken steps to improve user awareness and meet user needs;

(c) Also noted that national statistical offices and international organizations needed to remain abreast of changes in needs and respond to them;

(d) Considered that while considerable success had been achieved in meeting user needs, in particular through the use of new technology, the stage reached varied from country to country and the achievements to date could be further enhanced;

(e) Requested the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat to extend the study as outlined in paragraph 12 above and to circulate the results to national statistical offices and international organizations.

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# REPORT OF THE COMMISSION ON ITS TWENTY-SIXTH SESSION

Draft report

Addendum

Rapporteur: Jothan Anthony MWANIKI (Kenya)

## Chapter ___. INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC CLASSIFICATIONS

### International Classification of Status in Employment (ICSE)

1. The Commission considered item 5 of its agenda at its 439th meeting, on 5 February 1991. It had before it the report of the International Labour Office on the progress of work on the International Classification of Status in Employment (ICSE) (E/CN.3/1991/14).

2. The Commission was informed that the report contained information on the work done since the twenty-fifth session of the Commission. It was further informed that the schedule of work included a meeting of experts, to be convened by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) at Geneva early in 1992, to advise the ILO Bureau of Statistics on a draft revision of the classification for consideration by both the Fifteenth International Conference of Labour Statisticians held at Geneva in January 1993, and the twenty-seventh session of the Statistical Commission in 1993.

3. The Commission welcomed the ILO initiative to review ICSE which, it was noted, had remained virtually unchanged since it was first elaborated some 40 years ago. Many members and organizations expressed interest in the idea of expanding ICSE to reflect already existing practices in countries in order to enhance its usefulness.

4. Some members, however, expressed concern about the applicability to censuses and labour force surveys of the proposed definitions based on the criteria of "economic risks" and control. It was mentioned that field inquiries in many countries used self-assessment by respondents for reporting their status in employment and as a result the proposed criteria might raise difficulty. A point was also made on the ideological connotation of the term "economic risks" in certain countries where the phrase had often been used in a specific sense describing aspects of employer-employee relationships.

5. Several members pointed out that the revised ICSE should adequately take into account the situation of transition economies of the Eastern and Central European countries, particularly with regard to the new forms of enterprise ownership, joint-stock companies and co-operatives. The need for applicability in countries with centrally planned economies, where the employer-employee relationship did not exist in the traditional sense, was also stressed.

6. Questions were raised about the applicability of some of the existing categories of ICSE to developing countries - in particular, the categories of unpaid family workers and own-account workers. It was reported that the requirements of family relationship and household membership implied in the present definition of an unpaid family worker were unduly restrictive. With regard to own-account workers, it was mentioned that many respondents in surveys who were operating an enterprise did not consider the engagement of a relative, even if paid, as an employee and, consequently, they might classify themselves as own-account workers rather than employers.

7. The Commission stressed the need for a clear framework enabling the statistical treatment of particular borderline categories, including multiple jobholders, seasonal workers, temporary and permanent workers, homeworkers, marginal workers, casual workers, managers and directors who did not own the enterprises in which they worked, members of the armed forces and members of religious institutions.

8. Finally, several members pointed out their recent country experiences in examining their national classifications of status in employment and their willingness to contribute to the work of the proposed ILO meeting of experts.

9. The Commission noted the existing close co-operation between the International Labour Office and the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat in the context of population and housing census recommendations. The Commission reaffirmed its central interest in the work on ICSE. It noted that the existing classification of status in employment at the one-digit level had formed a part of the United Nations Population and Housing Census Recommendations over the past several decades as adopted by the Commission. Accordingly, the Commission considered that the proposed revised classification should be submitted to the Commission for adoption as well as to the International Conference of Labour Statisticians. In addition, the Commission reiterated that ICSE should remain distinct without overlapping with the revised International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities (ISIC) and the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO).

Action taken by the Commission

10. The Commission:

(a) Endorsed the time schedule and future work on the International Classification of Status in Employment (ICSE) by the International Labour Office in collaboration with the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat and other interested organizations;

(b) Strongly supported the ILO proposal to convene an expert group meeting on ICSE and recommended that the Group extensively consider the concerns mentioned in paragraphs 5-7 above;

(c) Requested the International Labour Office to prepare for the Commission, at its twenty-seventh session, a report on the International Classification of Status in Employment (ICSE), given the Commission's continued role with respect to this classification.

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Rapporteur: J. A. MWANIKI (Kenya)

## Chapter ___. INDUSTRIAL STATISTICS

### World Programme of Industrial Statistics

1. The Commission considered item 8 of its agenda at its 437th and 438th meetings, on 4 and 5 February 1991. It had before it the report of the Secretary-General on the World Programme of Industrial Statistics (E/CN.3/1991/18).

2. The Commission expressed support for the industrial statistics programme; such a programme was necessary regardless of whether the industrial sector was growing or declining relative to other sectors of the economy. The Commission stressed the importance of the role of industrial statistics in the context of all economic statistics, including the System of National Accounts (SNA) and pointed out that industrial data were an essential basis for national accounts estimations and other applications. The importance of international comparability among the national programmes was also stressed.

3. The Commission noted that country participation in the World Programme of Industrial Statistics had improved slightly between 1973 and 1983. However, many members expressed disappointment that the pace of growth had not been faster. The Commission expressed concern about the lack of information on why systems of industrial statistics had not been established more widely and expressed the opinion that the subject deserved analysis. It noted with regret that the

statistical results of the 1983 World Programme had not yet been published. Several members gave their views on the dimensions of the problem, including the general reduction of resources for statistics. Industrial statistics often suffered because of the lower priority assigned to it by national statistical offices. In addition, important political changes had affected the availability of resources and changed the structure or orientation of the statistical programme.

4. In considering the overall strategy for the next World Programme, the Commission reviewed the respective roles of bench-mark inquiries and annual surveys. It stressed that the production of timely and reliable annual statistical series was the primary concern of the Programme. The series were needed for examining the industrial sector and for various macro-economic analyses and monitoring. The Commission noted that a major role of bench-mark inquiries, like population and agricultural censuses, was to help improve the quality and coverage of annual data through providing a universe for sampling and a framework for interpretation of the data.

5. The Commission, however, was of the view that in certain cases the emphasis that had continued to be placed on the need for bench-mark enumerations might have contributed to the lack of progress. Several members mentioned that the bench-mark enumeration was an extremely demanding type of survey in both developed and developing countries. At the same time, the creation and maintenance of business registers was described as an expensive alternative that was difficult to sustain. Nevertheless, the Commission recognized that industrial statistics could not be interpreted correctly unless the universe to which the data referred had been well defined.

6. Several members of the Commission described a number of strategies that were currently used to carry out an economic survey programme on a step-by-step basis. It was pointed out that such partial approaches not only offered a short cut to statistical information on the most important industries but also provided a solid basis for capability-building for economic surveys. In view of those considerations, the Commission suggested that a technical report be prepared as part of the documentation for the 1993 World Programme. The report would further examine various strategies for capturing reliable and timely information on industrial activity and discuss the relative merits of the methods and approaches used.

7. The Commission agreed that 1993 was the most appropriate reference year, at least as a label for the next round, although it was recognized that some countries would need to use other years in order to co-ordinate the timing of their industrial enumerations with their other inquiries and statistical activities. Some members expressed a preference for 1994 or some other year. Several members pointed out that there were advantages in fixed periodicity within national statistical programmes. Accordingly, the Commission endorsed 1993 as the reference year for the next World Programme, but agreed there should be some flexibility at the national level, as required.

8. The Commission was pleased to note that the conceptual and practical topics for the next World Programme of Industrial Statistics, contained in section II of

the report of the Secretary-General, incorporated comments and suggestions made by many organizations, including the regional commissions, the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and the African Development Bank. Nevertheless, it was considered that the full list would place too heavy a burden on national statistical offices. The Commission expressed the view that the framework for the next World Programme should be kept very simple to help encourage wider country participation.

9. Many members, in their consideration of the conceptual topics, were of the view that resources should not be diverted from higher priority and more basic issues to those topics. The Commission noted that the greater the burden imposed on the training workshops in terms of topics to be covered in preparation for the World Programme, the less likely would be the success of the next round. Several members commented on the relative merits of the inclusion of financial or environmental data, the linking of industrial inquiries with SNA, the treatment of household and small-scale industry and the informal sector, non-industrial activities of industrial establishments and the expansion of the scope of surveys to include economic activities other than those of industry. The Commission noted the importance of those items among the statistical priorities of individual countries. Accordingly, the modular approach in the form of working papers, proposed for the preparation of documentation to support the next World Programme, was recognized as a useful way of accommodating individual views and priorities with regard to certain topics, resources permitting.

10. Among the various practical topics discussed, the Commission considered that the change-over from revision 2 to revision 3 of the International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities (ISIC) was the most important and should be assigned the highest priority. Some members expressed interest in the links between the various international commodity and activity classifications, namely the Central Product Classification (CPC), ISIC, the Standard International Trade Classification (SITC) and the Harmonized System. It was emphasized that CPC, which was specially created to be compatible with ISIC Rev.3 and the Harmonized System, should serve as the basic product classification. A few members singled out other practical topics, including a master list of typical main inputs, outputs and waste materials, creation and maintenance of business registers and the use of sampling in industrial inquiries.

11. The Commission recognized the great importance of technical co-operation and emphasized that it should be provided in a timely manner, particularly because some countries had had to suspend participation in the 1983 World Programme owing to resource problems. The Commission noted that the vast majority of developing countries participating in the World Programme were also represented at one of the regional training workshops. Accordingly, the Commission was pleased to note that the workshops had been described as a priority activity and expressed the wish that they could again play an important role. It was pointed out that, since no workshop had been held in the region of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean in connection with the 1983 World Programme, there would undoubtedly be great interest in participating in such workshops for the coming round. Some members emphasized that regional training workshops should be held in

developing countries that had already carried out a bench-mark industrial inquiry. The point was also made that those workshops provided an opportunity to build up the capacity for a system of industrial statistics. The task of mobilizing resources for industrial statistics programmes would be facilitated if their link to the implementation of SNA were stressed.

12. The Commission noted with satisfaction that assistance for technical co-operation projects had already been received from UNIDO, the United States Bureau of the Census and the Overseas Development Agency. However, the Commission called attention to the need for additional resources. It was noted that the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific had assigned priority to that area in its work programme for the next biennium.

## Action taken by the Commission

13. The Commission:

(a) Endorsed the continuation of the World Programme of Industrial Statistics;

(b) Noted with disappointment that the results of the 1983 World Programme showed no significant improvement over those of the 1973 Programme, but emphasized the need to be optimistic;

(c) Stressed the need to distinguish clearly between survey ends and means when reviewing the various survey options;

(d) Recommended that the International Recommendations for Industrial Statistics 1/ should remain the core document for the next World Programme;

(e) Urged that all efforts be made to avoid new topics for the next round, especially if the necessary resources for their implementation are not available;

(f) Assigned first priority to the conversion of data from ISIC Rev.2 to ISIC Rev.3 and stressed that the other topics should be kept very simple so as not to divert resources from that central task;

(g) Endorsed 1993 as the reference year for the next World Programme, although it recognized that there would of necessity be some variation, depending on other national priorities;

(h) Requested the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat to prepare a technical report as part of the documentation for the 1993 World Programme, setting out the various strategies available to deal with problems of capturing reliable and timely information on industrial activity and taking into account the strengths and weaknesses of such instruments as bench-mark inquiries and various kinds of annual surveys, including those covering all or part of the industrial sector, all or some of the size categories of industrial units and all or a part of the country;

(i) Emphasized the importance of technical co-operation for improving the World Programme of Industrial Statistics in the context of national statistical capabilities and requested multilateral and bilateral donors to provide support for such technical co-operation as part of an overall effort to improve economic statistics.

## Notes

1/ Statistical Papers, Series M, No. 48, Rev.1 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.83.XVII.8).

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## Chapter ___. NATIONAL ACCOUNTS AND BALANCES

### System of Balances of the National Economy (MPS)

1. The Commission considered item 4 (b) of its agenda at its 441st meeting, on 6 February 1991. It had before it the note by the Secretary-General (E/CN.3/1991/12), transmitting a report of the secretariat of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA), on the activities of the CMEA Standing Commission for Co-operation in the Field of Statistics with respect to the System of Balances of the National Economy (MPS) and related issues.

2. The Commission was informed that some countries found it useful to continue utilization of MPS in their statistical systems. Practically all the countries that currently used or formerly had used MPS intended to continue their efforts to apply the System of National Accounts (SNA) either as a whole or in part.

3. The Commission was pleased to note that a second draft of the methodology for calculating gross domestic product (GDP) in CMEA member countries had been discussed at the CMEA Expert Group Meeting in January 1991 in Moscow. Representatives of the Statistical Office in the United Nations Secretariat and OECD and several SNA experts participated in the discussion of the document and presented SNA topics. The meeting agreed to finalize the second draft of the document after the SNA revision.

## Action taken by the Commission

4. The Commission:

(a) Took note of the report prepared by the CMEA secretariat on progress achieved in the development of the methodology of GDP calculations applicable to CMEA member countries;

(b) Requested that any further elaboration of MPS methodology made in order to bring MPS and SNA closer together be reported to the Commission at its twenty-seventh session and that further work on the methodology of GDP calculations applicable to countries still using MPS be presented as part of the reports on SNA.

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